

# New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Social Studies

## INTRODUCTION

### Social Studies Education in the 21st Century

The digital age has transformed social studies education, allowing 21st-century learners to transcend the limits of time and place and experience historic events virtually. By expanding their learning networks through online collaboration with experts and other students from around the world, New Jersey social studies students develop an increased depth of understanding of our global society. At the same time, their understanding of the fundamental principles and values of American democracy and citizenship provides the conceptual framework that allows them to make informed decisions about local, national, and international issues and challenges.

**Mission:** *Social studies education provides learners with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives needed to become active, informed citizens and contributing members of local, state, national, and global communities in the digital age.*

**Vision:** An education in social studies fosters a population that:

- Is civic minded, globally aware, and socially responsible.
- Exemplifies fundamental values of American citizenship through active participation in local and global communities.
- Makes informed decisions about local, state, national, and global events based on inquiry and analysis.
- Considers multiple perspectives, values diversity, and promotes cultural understanding.
- Recognizes the implications of an interconnected global economy.
- Appreciates the global dynamics between people, places, and resources.
- Utilizes emerging technologies to communicate and collaborate on career and personal matters with citizens of other world regions.

### Intent and Spirit of the Social Studies Standards

All students receive social studies instruction from Preschool through grade 12. The challenges of the 21st century are complex, have global implications, and are connected to people, places, and events of the past. The study of social studies focuses on deep understanding of concepts that enable students to think critically and systematically about local, regional, national, and global issues.

Authentic learning experiences that enable students to apply content knowledge, develop citizenship skills, and collaborate with students from around the world prepare New Jersey students for the 21st-century workplace. The natural integration of technology in social studies education allows students to overcome geographic borders, apply scientific and mathematical analysis to historical questions and contemporary issues, appreciate cultural diversity, and experience events through the examination of primary sources.

The New Jersey social studies standards and indicators reflect national and state standards and other documents published by the [National Center for History Education](#), [National Council for Social Studies](#), [National Council for Geographic Education](#), [Center for Civic Education](#), [National Council on Economic Education](#), [Mid-Continent Research on Education and Learning](#), [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#), and the [Partnership for 21st Century Skills](#).

Social studies instruction occurs throughout the P-12 spectrum:

- At the **Preschool** level, students participate in interdisciplinary activities that promote cultural awareness, sensitivity to individual differences, and respect for diversity.
- In grades **K-4**, students learn fundamental concepts about government, citizenship, geography, economics, and history. The focus of instruction is on developing an understanding of core democratic values, the rights and responsibilities of American citizens, and how key people and events contributed to the development of the American heritage. Exploration of cultural universals enables students to realize how the availability of resources, the changing environment, and innovation impact everyday life.
- In grades **5-8**, students build upon K-4 foundational content. Through instruction in U.S. History and World History/Global Studies, they begin to analyze the implications of government structures and economic policies for individuals, communities, nations, and global relationships. The study of migratory patterns and belief systems that in the past led to cooperation and conflict among groups of people enable students to realize the significance of cultural transmission in today's global society. Relevant activities that help students connect content knowledge to current issues and that promote service learning empower students to become civic-minded and socially active.
- In grades **9-12**, students continue to study U.S. History and World History/Global Studies. They consider historical viewpoints in order to analyze the role of the individual in society and the significance of fundamental documents to basic human rights. Socratic discussion groups and debate activities enable students to develop sound reasoning and effective communication skills. Opportunities to collaborate with students from around the world and experts in the field, and to develop innovative solutions to real world problems on the local, national, and global levels, mirror the 21st-century workplace and allow students to practice important career skills. By the end of grade 12, students have a heightened understanding of the cause-and-effect relationship between past and present events, recognize patterns of interactions, and understand the impact of events in an interconnected world.

## Revised Standards

The revised social studies standards provide the foundation for creating local curricula and developing meaningful assessments. The revised standards are as follows:

- **Standard 6.1 U.S. History: America in the World.** *All students will acquire the knowledge and skills to think analytically about how past and present interactions of people, cultures, and the environment shape the American heritage. Such knowledge and skills enable students to make informed decisions that reflect fundamental rights and core democratic values as productive citizens in local, national, and global communities.*
- **Standard 6.2 World History/Global Studies.** *All students will acquire the knowledge and skills to think analytically and systematically about how past interactions of people, cultures, and the environment affect issues across time and cultures. Such knowledge and skills enable students to make informed decisions as socially and ethically responsible world citizens in the 21st century.*
- **Standard 6.3 Active Citizenship in the 21st Century.** *All students will acquire the skills needed to be active, informed citizens who value diversity and promote cultural understanding by working collaboratively to address challenges that are inherent in living in an interconnected world.*

Four strands frame the content within each standard: (A) Civics, Government, and Human Rights; (B) Geography, People, and the Environment; (C) Economics, Innovation, and Technology; and (D) History, Culture, and Perspectives.

## ***The Role of Essential Questions***

Key essential questions recur throughout the study of history. They provoke inquiry and lead to deeper understanding of the big ideas that enable students to better comprehend how the past connects to the present. The essential questions created for this project, which follow, were used to frame content goals and to inform the development of the cumulative progress indicators.

### **A. Civics, Government, and Human Rights**

- How do citizens, civic ideals, and government institutions interact to balance the needs of individuals and the common good?
- How have economic, political, and cultural decisions promoted or prevented the growth of personal freedom, individual responsibility, equality, and respect for human dignity?

### **B. Geography, People, and the Environment**

- How do physical geography, human geography, and the human environment interact to influence or determine the development of cultures, societies, and nations?

### **C. Economics, Innovation, and Technology**

- How can individuals, groups, and societies apply economic reasoning to make difficult choices about scarce resources? What are the possible consequences of these decisions for individuals, groups, and societies?
- How have scientific and technological developments over the course of history changed the way people live and economies and governments function?

### **D. History, Culture, and Perspectives**

- How do our interpretations of past events inform our understanding of cause and effect, and continuity and change, and how do they influence our beliefs and decisions about current public policy issues?
- How can the study of multiple perspectives, beliefs systems, and cultures provide a context for understanding and challenging public actions and decisions in a diverse and interdependent world?

## ***Organization of the Standards***

The organization and content of the 2009 social studies standards reflects N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1.iv., which requires at least 15 credits in social studies, including satisfaction of N.J.S.A. 18A:35-1 and 2; five credits in world history; and the integration of civics, economics, geography, and global studies content in all courses.

- Standard 6.1 U.S. History: America in the World applies to grades P-12; at the P and K-4 levels, content is organized by strand only; at the 5-8 and 9-12 levels, content organized by era and strand.
- Standard 6.2 World History/Global Studies applies only to grades 5-12; at both the 5-8 and 9-12 levels, content organized by era and strand.
- Standard 6.3 Active Citizenship in the 21st Century applies to grades P-12; at all levels (P, K-4, 5-8, and 9-12) content is organized by strand only.

Standard	Grade Level	Organization
6.1 U.S. History: America in the World	P-4	By strand only
	5-8	By era and strand
	9-12	By era and strand
6.2 World History/Global Studies	5-8	By era and strand
	8-12	By era and strand
6.3 Active Citizenship in the 21st Century	P-4	By strand only
	5-8	By strand only
	9-12	By strand only

The organizational scheme of the social studies standards highlights the interrelationship among government/civics, economics, and geography during each time period throughout history. (For a full listing of the eras studied, see the [Social Studies Timeframe Table](#).)

In addition, the integration of social studies content *and* skills is essential for understanding and for developing habits of mind that are necessary for students to become informed citizens and contributing members of society. Thus, four key social studies skills (chronological thinking, spatial thinking, critical thinking, and presentational skills) have been identified and elaborated for the three K-12 grade clusters (K-4, 5-8, 9-12). These skills should be systematically integrated into instruction and assessed in conjunction with content. (See the [Social Studies Skills Table](#)).

### ***Coding of Cumulative Progress Indicators***

For standards 6.1, grades P-4, and for standard 6.3, all grades, each Cumulative Progress Indicator code should be interpreted as follows:

6.1.	4.	A.	1
↑	↑	↑	↑
standard number	grade	strand	indicator

For standards 6.1 and 6.2, grades 5-12, the inclusion of the era (see the [Social Studies Timeframe Table](#)) impacts the coding of each Cumulative Progress Indicator as follows:

6.1.	8.	A.	1.	a
↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
standard number	grade	strand	era	indicator

### **Resources**

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